



Economy Plan Summary

2020-2024

Your at-a-glance guide to how we're supporting the recovery and future prosperity of our county's economy



Introduction

Our Economy Plan for West Sussex aims to support the recovery and future prosperity of the county's economy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are committed to working with partners across all sectors of the business community to ensure we lend support where it is most needed and will make the most difference.

This summary gives you a snapshot of some of the ways we are already working to aid economic recovery, support businesses, and play our part in boosting growth and prosperity.

You'll find examples of success stories, and some facts and figures about the local economy, as well as an abridged explanation of what the Plan is about.

If you would like more information or to read the full document, [please visit the County Council's website](#).



Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Paul Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Marshall
Leader of West Sussex
County Council

West Sussex Economy Key Facts



79% of economically active 16 – 64 year olds in West Sussex are employed (Jun 21)



West Sussex is home to around **867,600 people** (2020 figure)



In 2021 there were **43,100 businesses** in West Sussex



Average weekly gross earnings for residents who work full time in West Sussex is **£610.50, which is lower than the national and regional average**



In 2020 40.5% of residents had a **degree level or qualification degree level or above**



West Sussex is a small firm economy **with 85% of businesses employing less than 10 people in 2021**



In July 2020 the numbers of West Sussex residents that were furloughed from their jobs by their employers reached a peak of **133,000 which represents a 33% take up rate**



By the end of 2021, West Sussex businesses received **over £264m in grants from local authorities** in response to the impact Covid-19

What is the Economy Plan?

A sustainable and prosperous economy is key to the future wellbeing of the county and is a key priority for West Sussex County Council.

The Economy Plan sets out our priorities for supporting the recovery and future prosperity of the West Sussex economy.

It focuses on where the County Council is well placed to respond to the challenges facing the broader economy and on where we will seek to work collaboratively to make a difference.

There are nine priority themes within the Plan:

- **Themes 1-3** reflect the economic landscape for Crawley and the wider Gatwick Diamond, and for the coastal and rural economies.
 - **Themes 4-5** focus on supporting business start-ups, existing businesses, and employment and skills.
 - **Themes 6-7** focus on two key sectors we will prioritise - the visitor economy, with its links to hospitality, and the health and social care market.
 - **Themes 8-9** focus on the opportunities around digital infrastructure and the application of digital technology to boost business productivity and enhance digital skills, as well as the importance of embedding climate change and the environment in our approach.
-

Who is involved?

Many partners are involved, including other local councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership, business and trade representative organisations, business community networks, further and higher education, and the voluntary sector.

We are committed to creating and nurturing stronger partnerships locally and regionally to help achieve the Plan's priorities.

We will also represent the needs of the county to the Government, working with local MPs where it is appropriate to do so on the challenges the county is facing.

Residents also have an important role to play by supporting local businesses, shopping locally and visiting attractions within the county.

What are we doing?

We are working on a range of activities to achieve our goals. These include initiatives to support and grow the West Sussex economy, local businesses, and jobs; partnerships with the District and Borough Councils to deliver local improvements for residents, businesses, and visitors; and work to enable the next generation of digital connectivity across the county. Some examples of our achievements and current focus are featured in the following pages.

Economic Growth

We are working on a range of initiatives with partners to support and grow the West Sussex economy, local businesses, and jobs.

The Track, Bognor Regis

[The Track](#) is an initiative led by the County Council to support the growth of creative and digital businesses in Bognor Regis and coastal West Sussex, including start-ups, micro and small businesses.

The Track is a co-working hub located inside the newly refurbished Bognor Regis Railway Station. The County Council led the work to transform vacant spaces into a modern and vibrant collaborative workspace, with meeting rooms, ultrafast fibre broadband and an events space. Town Square Spaces have been appointed to manage and run the The Track on behalf of the County Council.



Low Carbon Across the South and East (LoCASE)

[LoCASE](#) supports small and medium-sized enterprises to improve their energy efficiency and to grow and innovate in green technologies. Environmentally focused businesses can receive grants and support to help them grow. All businesses can apply for grants to support energy efficiency and to reduce carbon foot-print and operating costs.

The County Council is a strategic and funding partner in LoCASE, to help ensure West Sussex businesses benefit. The University of Brighton hosted Green Growth Platform is coordinating the delivery of the scheme in our area.



LoCASE is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. WSCC has contributed match funding and are Strategic Partner.

Experience West Sussex (EWS)

EWS supports and promotes the West Sussex visitor economy, and the jobs and businesses that are part of the sector. The [Experience West Sussex website](#) showcases the county to visitors, including things to do, places to stay and where to eat and drink.

The Experience West Sussex Partnership is a collaboration between the West Sussex local authorities and the Coastal West Sussex Partnership, hosted by the County Council. Together the partners work locally, regionally and nationally to maximise opportunities for the county and its tourism businesses.



Place initiatives

We are working with District and Borough Councils on agreed priorities to bring local improvements for residents, businesses and visitors.

Portland Road and Railway Approach, Worthing

The County Council is working in partnership to improve and revitalise the Public Realm in Worthing town centre as a key focus in the [Growth Deal](#). The partnership is investing up to £12m into projects as part of the revival and growth of the coastal town economy. These will improve the quality and accessibility of public areas connecting Worthing station, town centre development sites and the seafront.

Portland Road improvements are the first phase of the investment programme to create sustainable connections and will see the area transformed into a vibrant shopping and hospitality destination. Plans for Railway Approach are progressing to create an attractive and accessible gateway to Worthing, incorporating a sustainable transport hub as part of the wider Teville Gate strategic regeneration area.



Crawley Eastern Gateway

The [Crawley Growth Programme](#) is a £60m investment programme that will unlock jobs, business space and homes, upgrade the business and living environment in the town centre and Manor Royal Business District and secure further investment. This includes schemes to be delivered by the County Council, Crawley Borough Council, Metrobus, Gatwick Airport Limited, Manor Royal Business District and developers.

Crawley Eastern Gateway, led by the County Council, is a priority that will deliver better public space and connectivity improvements. It will complement proposals for the Station Gateway scheme and enhance pedestrian and cycle access in the area. The scheme supports wider Town Centre regeneration opportunities at a range of sites.



Burgess Hill Place and Connectivity Programme

The County Council is working in partnership with Mid Sussex District Council through the [Mid Sussex Growth Deal](#). The Burgess Hill Place and Connectivity Programme is a key priority that will deliver a comprehensive network of new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes together with public realm improvements to support the planned growth of Burgess Hill.

The Place and Connectivity Programme includes the Western Gateway, Burgess Hill and Wivelsfield Station Improvements. It will deliver pedestrian and cycle routes through key corridors linking the town centre, stations and employment areas and links to wider improvements within the pedestrian and cycle network. Proposals are also being progressed to deliver town centre public realm improvements through Church Walk and Church Road together with further pedestrian and cycle improvements through the Victoria Business Park.



Digital initiatives

We are supporting the next generation of digital connectivity across the county.

Accelerating commercial investment in digital infrastructure

The government recognises that nationwide gigabit-capable infrastructure needs to be heavily invested in commercially by telecommunications suppliers. Working with the market the County Council has been able to attract additional significant commercial investments by Openreach, CityFibre and Virgin Media. Recent successes include CityFibre's [£100m announcement to invest in building its 'Fibre to the Home' network in major urban areas](#), Openreach's [investment in 26 rural exchange areas to upgrade them to 'Fibre to the Premises' network](#) and Virgin Media's decision to work with the government on piloting its [national gigabit voucher scheme](#) to help West Sussex communities benefit from next-generation connectivity - a national first.

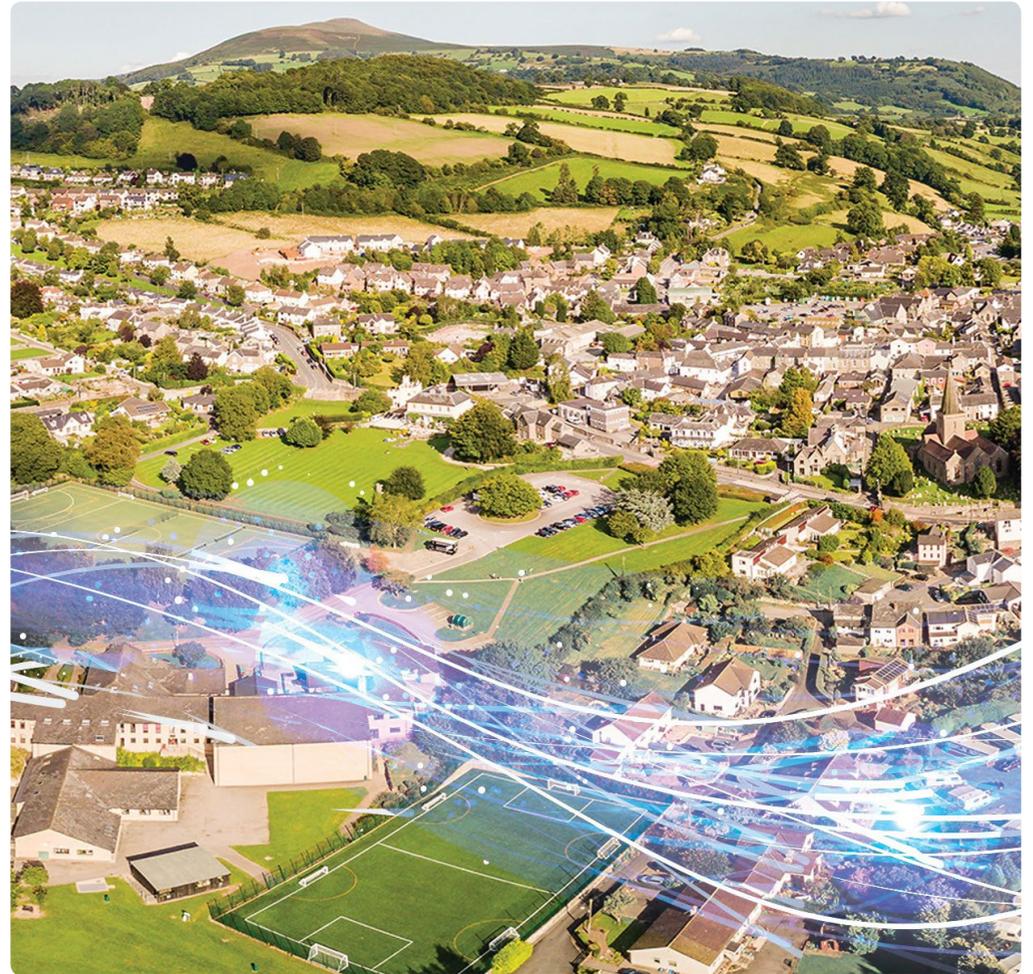
Securing this scale of commercial investment helps to position West Sussex as an attractive county able to support growth in new and existing businesses, retaining workers and attracting new ones. It also means we can offer a high quality of life to our residents, employees and visitors who are able to benefit from fast, reliable broadband services to support them in their daily activity.



Gigabit vouchers 'top up' scheme

Our county-wide scheme has enabled communities to work directly with broadband suppliers to fund and install gigabit-capable digital infrastructure in their local area. Funded by all West Sussex councils, the 'top up' increases the value of the [government's national gigabit voucher scheme](#) per premise. It is targeted at rural areas that are unlikely to benefit from a commercially funded roll out of gigabit-capable broadband.

Working with the Department for Digital, Media and Sport (DCMS) we have 'topped up' community schemes to the value of more than £5m and look set to leverage more than £6m DCMS funding into the county, enabling an extra 13,000 rural premises to benefit from gigabit-capable broadband sooner than if left to the commercial market to invest. This successful initiative has now fully committed its available funding and the projects should be completed by the summer of 2023.



Supporting enterprises

Digital skills are increasingly important in everyday life, including for communication, work and accessing information and services online. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how vital the work by the County Council and its partners is to provide access to high quality digital infrastructure for working, schooling and running a business from home. Effective use of digital technologies enables businesses to broaden or diversify their offer online and to reach more customers. It can also help them save time and money by digitising 'back office' functions such as payroll, supply chain and customer management.

Hundreds of West Sussex businesses are benefitting from a joint initiative supported by all local authorities in the county led by the County Council. ['Recover and Rise'](#) provides practical support and tools for businesses to help them learn more about the business benefits of transforming their processes and activities through their digital journey. This exciting initiative is supporting the county's businesses to recover and build resilience for the future.



How to find out more

This summary has given you a snapshot of some of the ways the County Council is working to aid economic recovery, support businesses and play our part in boosting growth and prosperity. To find out about the other initiatives we are working on and the support available, please:

Visit: [Business West Sussex](#)

Follow us on Twitter: [@BizWestSussex](#)

